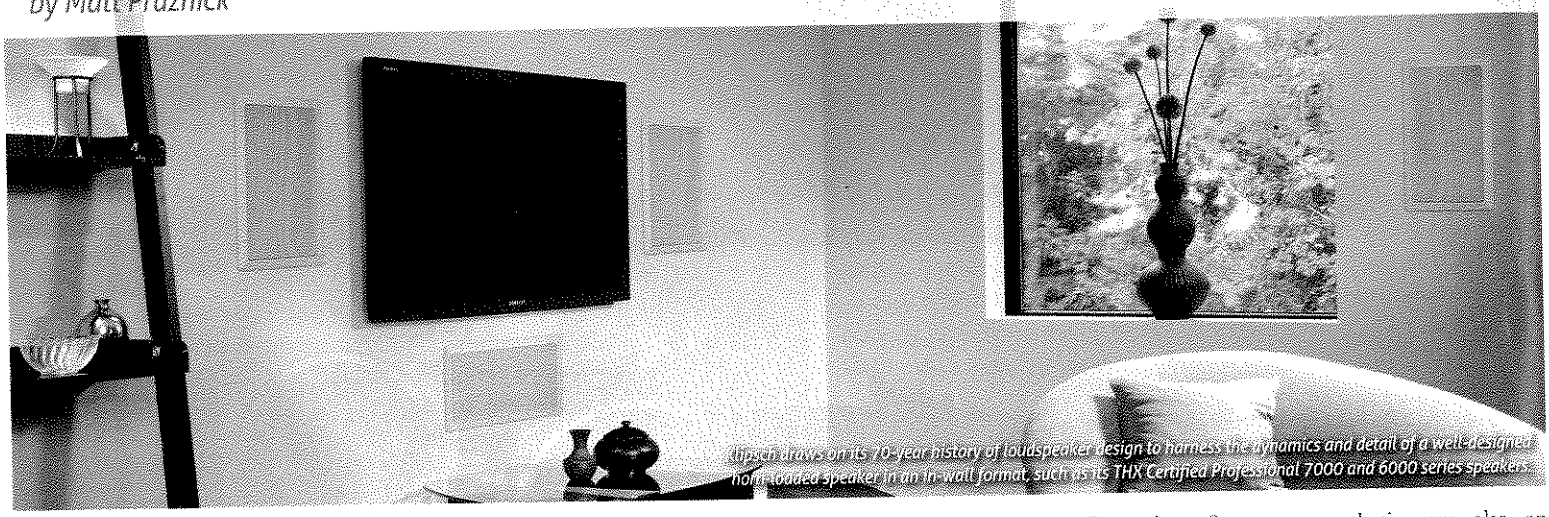
Next-Level In-Walls

THE NEWEST ARCHITECTURAL SPEAKERS OFFER HIGH-PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENTS

by Matt Pruznick



Klipsch draws on its 70-year history of loudspeaker design to harness the dynamics and detail of a well-designed horn-loaded speaker in an in-wall format, such as its THX Certified Professional 7000 and 6000 series speakers.

It's happened often: when people find out I write about the home technology industry, they ask my advice on home audio solutions. More times than not, their question is about the viability of a certain do-it-yourself brand (you know, the one that starts with an "S"). I say, "Sure, those systems are good. But do you want good, or great?"

I go on to explain to these friends and acquaintances—especially those who I know have money to spend—that if they want a sound system that they'll really love and want to show off, they need to hire an integrator to come install it. Because, as good as wireless audio technologies have become over recent years, they still can't compete with the quality of a hardwired solution with in-wall and/or in-ceiling speakers.

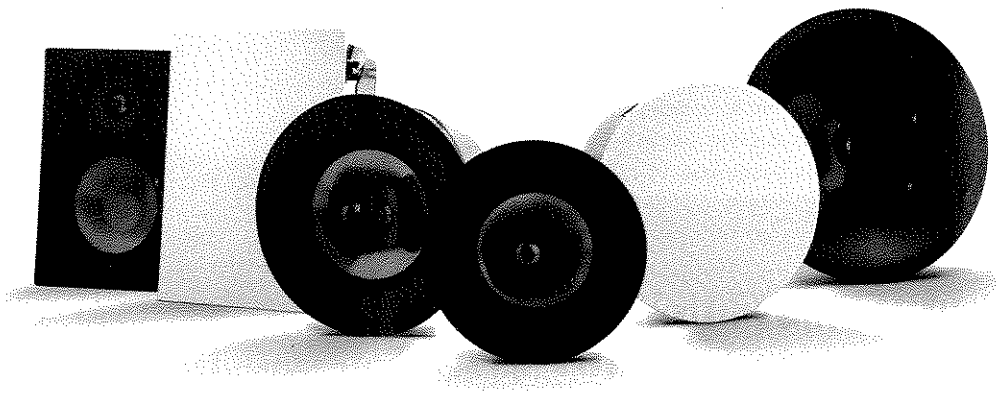
"In-wall speakers remain a viable category because of the profitability, convenience, and, most importantly, performance that they offer over today's Bluetooth speakers," said Michael Buratto, product manager, component audio at Klipsch. "While Bluetooth speakers may offer a level of room-to-room portability to the end user, by no means can they match a truly integrated, customized distributed audio system."

Brands like Klipsch also have the added advantage of experience—in this case, 70 years' worth—in engineering top-notch solutions. "By developing the first horn-loaded in-wall speakers, we've been able to harness the dynamics and detail of a well-designed horn-loaded speaker in an in-wall format," Buratto continued. "The best example of this would be our THX Certified Professional 7000 and 6000 Series—a true high-performance home theater system in an architectural form factor that could go toe-to-toe with any box speaker on the market for output, detail, and power."

In addition to the quality of the sound, consistency of coverage is also a key benefit of architectural loudspeakers. KEF, another iconic loudspeaker brand, has developed technologies for its in-wall speakers designed to ensure even coverage of sound throughout a space. "KEF brings its hallmark technology, the Uni-Q driver array, to many of our in-wall offerings," said David Kroll, vice president of sales, U.S. "The Uni-Q offers extremely wide off-axis response with no shift in tonal balance, making it easier to place the speaker in any room. KEF has a wide range of offerings, from an array of traditional speakers to custom installation speakers, all of which are timbre matched."

Beyond performance, aesthetics are also an increasingly important concern among consumers in choosing technology—especially in projects involving interior designers. Here, architectural audio wins again. "Wired in-wall speakers visually disappear in the room," said Jim Garrett, director o marketing and product management for Harman "Interior designers don't particularly like big boxe of audio gear in the room, even if they are wireless Our products use our Zero-Bezel grilles, whic reduce the visual intrusion into the room."

According to Garrett, Harman's Revel an JBL brands have been working to incorporate th same technologies found in their traditional bo loudspeakers—using the same materials, timbr matching, and double-blind listening tests—t create a product that sounds fantastic and blend in with a room's décor. "For JBL Synthesis, it



Paradigm's CI Pro line of in-wall speakers is made in Canada and features patented developments such as Active Ridge Technology and Perforated Phase Alignment to heighten performance and extend reliability.